

PRESS RELEASE

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Fantasy Sports a Catalyst for India's AI Revolution in Sports

White paper by Columbia Professor Prof. Vishal Misra based on FIFS Sports Data Gamethon

May 3, 2025, Mumbai: In line with India's vision to become a global AI hub, **Professor Vishal Misra, Vice-Dean of Computing & AI, Department of Engineering at Columbia University** and an expert advisor to the **FIFS Sports Data Gameathon**, launched a white paper titled "**Fantasy Sports as a Catalyst for India's AI Revolution in Sports**" at **WAVES 2025 (World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit)**.

The white paper is based on **insights from FIFS Sports Data Gameathon**, a national-level sports AI challenge launched in partnership with Google Cloud and Dream11. The challenge invited India's top engineering and technology institutes to leverage data to develop AI/ML models based on real-world sports applications and compete in daily fantasy sports format.

The whitepaper highlights **the need for making sports a focus sector for the IndiaAI Mission, role of fantasy sports as a vehicle for democratising AI development, and leveraging initiatives like Gameathon to build indigenous AI solutions for sports & beyond.**

Fantasy sports has the advantage of widespread adoption and based on its data driven approach, offers a unique opportunity to engage India's vast pool of technical talent. It will also help in integrating sports analytics with grassroot innovation.

Key Highlights from the White Paper:

- Need to recognize sports as a strategic AI lever under the IndiaAI Mission
- Fantasy sports is a mass-accessible testbed for AI/ML research and application
- Leveraging Sports Data Gameathon as a scalable model for skill-building, real-time model deployment, and cross-disciplinary innovation
- Production-ready AI solutions developed by student teams from several universities like IIT Bombay, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Hyderabad, VIT Chennai, IIIT Dharwad etc.
- Real-world impact: advancing athlete performance, improving team strategy, and boosting sports engagement

Commenting on the launch, Prof. Vishal Misra said, "Fantasy sports is more than entertainment—they are a powerful, accessible platform for advancing AI in India. By turning sports into a data science playground, we can nurture the next generation of AI talent while unlocking real-world applications in athlete performance, fan engagement, and strategic decision-making. The FIFS Sports Data Gameathon not only supported IndiaAI's application development and FutureSkills goals but also showed how **fantasy platforms can fuel AI-driven innovation beyond elite teams**, making sophisticated analytics tools accessible at scale."

The paper further shared **key policy recommendations**:

- Establish a **national sports data repository** under the IndiaAI Datasets Platform
- Develop **sports-focused AI curricula** in higher education
- Create a dedicated **AI-in-sports innovation hub** within IndiaAI
- Launch regular, **multi-sport data competitions** to promote innovation
- Enable **real-time data infrastructure** for dynamic AI models
- Foster **public-private partnerships** between fantasy platforms, academia, and sports bodies
- Encourage **cross-disciplinary research** in AI, sports science, and statistics

As India targets a USD 500 billion GDP boost through AI adoption by 2025, the paper makes a compelling case for sports to be integrated as a formal pillar of the IndiaAI Mission. Through accessible platforms like fantasy sports and initiatives like the Gameathon, India can build a robust, inclusive AI ecosystem with transformative potential for both sports and society.

About the author:

<https://www.engineering.columbia.edu/faculty-staff/directory/vishal-misra>